

## A Change of Heart

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As seasons change, we find ourselves rearranging what we deem important in our lives. We diligently change the oil in our automobiles. We change our babies' diapers; we change our clothing from winter to spring. We even change our house décor so that anything that even reminds us of the winter holidays is gone. Change is such a constant part of our lives too. But then, why is it so difficult to change our hearts?

Summertime, for most people, consists of school breaks, family vacations, amusement parks, riding bikes, swimming pools, and barbecues. Here at the Women & Children's Shelter we realize and are thankful for any opportunity for our women and children to live similar lives ... lives full of love, laughter, fellowship, and learning experiences. With the help from donors, we try to change scenery once in a while for our guests. Like most people, we try to have fun too.

We have summer fun, and the women here at Bethesda Mission really get in touch with their childlike self. We go camping, we spend a day at the beach, and we even travel to a public zoo. We make everyone feel they are part of a family, even if they came through our doors feeling all alone.

When a woman walks through our doors, many times she has a hole in her heart. For her, it's not just going to be a casual shift of attitude. It's going to be a long, demolition process of old hurts transformed into a new creation, and a renewal of the heart that only Jesus can give!

As far as a change of heart for me, looking back ten years ago, I walked through the doors of Bethesda Mission's Women & Children's Shelter. It was August 8, 2002. I remember it like it was yesterday. I just wanted to be loved ... and most of all ... be able to love. I had such a hard heart and I knew only Jesus and a team of loving and skillful people could help me.

The first thing that helped me have a change of heart was the opportunity to spend my third day at Bethesda Mission on the beach. I thought Wow! ... This is nothing like living on the streets or being in prison. I felt like a little girl in the arms of my father who loved me unconditionally. I was changed from the inside-out. My process had begun. I felt human again, for the first time in 28 years! I was willing to fight for my life. I did whatever it took to stay clean and rebuild a relationship with my family and most importantly, with Jesus.

Is the journey easy? "NO", but one day at a time, one moment at a time it can be done. That is the message I relay here at the Women & Children's Shelter when our guests are having a hard time ... that Jesus can change your heart! He did it for me and He'll do it for you!

So summer is here again and here at Bethesda Mission's Women & Children's Shelter we are looking forward to changing from the negatives that destroy our lives, moving to the positives that give us life, going to the beach, riding our bikes, playing tennis, going camping, swimming, and most of all, allowing our hearts to be changed.

Where did we get the idea we can't change? From whence come statements such as, "It's my nature to worry," or "I'll always be this way." "I have a bad temper." "I can't help the way I react." Would we make similar statements about our bodies? "It's just my nature to have a broken leg." "I can't do anything about it." Of course not! If our bodies malfunction, we seek help. Shouldn't we do the same with our "Hearts"? Shouldn't we seek aid for our sour attitudes? Can't we request treatment for our selfish tirades? Of course we can! Jesus can change our hearts! He wants us to have a heart like His.

Can you imagine a better offer? God's plan for you is nothing short of a new heart. If you were a car, God would want to control your engine. If you were a computer, God would claim the software and the hard drive. If you were an airplane, He'd take His seat in the cockpit. But you are a person, so He wants to change your heart! Praise God for His life-changing promises!

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.  
I will take out the stubborn hearts of stone from your bodies,  
and I will give you obedient hearts of flesh." Exodus 36:26